

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 /026 W
-----119727 160211Z /75

R 151234Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4149

UNCLAS SANA 1252

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: SHUM, YE
SUBJECT: INQUIRY INTO STATUS OF JEWS IN YEMEN

REF: STATE 65060

1. PLEASE TELL GRUEN THAT WE WILL DO WHAT WE CAN TL HELP
HIS REFTEL INQUIRY HERE IN YEMEN.

2. THE SITUATION NORTH OF SANA, WHERE ALL OF JEWS WHO
REMAIN IN YEMEN APPARENTLY LIVE, REMAINS UNSETTLED WITH
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRIBES CURRENTLY MORE IMPORTANT THAN
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRIBES AND GOVERNMENT. MOREOVER, WE
HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT TRAVEL, EITHER CASUAL OR OFFICIAL, TO
THE NORTH IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND I
WOULD BE SURPRISED IF THE TWO MAN TEAM AND PHOTOGRAPHER
MENTIONED IN REFTEL DIDN'T GET THE SAME BRUSHOFF.

3. IT IS IMPORTANT TO APPLY FOR VISAS DESCRIBED IN REFTEL
SO THAT YEMENI GOVERNMENT CAN MAKE A DECISION IN ADVANCE
ON MERITS OF CASE. IT WOULD BE MUCH MORE DIFFICULT
FOR US, IN ANY CASE, TO HELP IF THE PURPOSES OF THE TRIP
WERE NOT FULLY AND COMPLETELY STATED.

4. WE HAVE TALKED IN THE PAST HERE WITH MUHAMMAD
ABD AL-AZIZ SALAM, FORMER HEAD OF YAR PERMANENT
MISSION TO UN, WHO HAS IN TURN BEEN APPROACHED BY AN
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AMERICAN JEW OF YEMENI EXTRACTION NAMED (WE THINK)
HABSHAYSH. SALEM EVEN HAD ACCEPTED INVITATIONS TO
HABSHAYSH'S NEW YORK HOUSE FOR SOCIAL GATHERINGS AS A
WAY OF SHOWING PRIDE OF YAR IN YEMENI BACKGROUND OF
THIS FAMILY. ACCORDING TO SALAM, HABSHAYSH HAD EARLIER
RAISED QUESTION OF VISIT TO YEMEN TO RENEW FRATERNAL
TIES WITH CORELIGIONISTS THERE AND TO PROVIDE WHATEVER

SUPPORT MIGHT BE DESIRED FOR RELIGIOUS TRAINING AND WELFARE OF REMNANT OF JEWS WHO REMAIN IN YEMEN. ACCORDING TO SALAM, WHO NOT ALWAYS COMWETELY RELIABLE, HE HAD RECOMMENDED FOREIGN MINISTRY APPROVAL OF HABSHAYSH VISIT SHOULD APPLICATIOGC EVER BE MADE IN FORMAL FASHION. SALAM IS NOW HEAD OF SECRETARIATE TO PRIME MINISTER AND WE WOULD BE WILLING TO APPROACH HIM AGAIN TO EXPLAIN SIGNIFICANE OF REJECTION TO AMERICAN PUBLIC. IN THIS CONNECTION, IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR US TO HAVE IN CABLE FORM EXACT PURPOSES OF VISIT IN ORDER FOR US TO REASSURE SUSPICIOUS YEMENI OFFICIALS. SPECIFICALLY, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO GIVE THEM SOME INFORMATION ABOUT PURPOSES OF AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE IN UNDERTAKING THIS WORK, RELIGIOUS AND FRATERNAL NATURE OF INQUIRY, AND ANYTHING WITH GROUP CAN SAY TO REASSURE YEMENIS ABOUT TIES TO ISRAEL OR DESIRE TO ENCOURAGE EMIGRATION.

5. YEMENI FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIALS, INCLUDING FOREIGN MIINSTER ABDULLAH AL-ASNAJ, HAVE TOLD US IN THE PAST THAT THEY WOULD NOT OBJECT IN PRINCIPLE TO SUCH AVISIT AND THAT NOTHING IN THEIR VISA LAWS PROHIBITED AMERICAN JEWS FROM VISITING, OR YEMENI JEWS FROM LEAVING. WE THINK SUCH STATEMENTS, HOWEVER, ARE SOMEWHAT SELF-SERVING AND NOT QUITE TRUE LIKE YAR INVITATION TO ALL YEMENI JEWS TO RETURN. YEMENIS ARE VERY SENSITIVE ABOUT INQUIRY INTO STATUS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES. THEY UNCLASSIFIED

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WOULD CERTAINLY NOT APPROVE SCHOLARLY WORK INTO STATUS OF HERETICAL MUSLIM SECT OF ISMAILIS, OR EVEN OF DOMINANT ZAYDI OR SHAFI SECTS. WHILE THEY ARE LESS DISTRUBED THAN ANY ARABES WE KNOW BY ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE, YEMENIS WOULD BE VERY AFRAID OF GIVING DOMESTIC AND RADICAL ARAB CRITICS A WEAPON TO USE AGAINST THE CURRENT MODERATE BUT NO COMPLETE SECURE REGIME HERE IN SANA. IN ANY CASE, GRUEN SHOULD BE SURE THAT MY MISSION AND I WILL HELP WHERE WE CAN. WITH NO PRECEDENT TO GUIDE US WE DON'T KNOW HOW SUCCESSFUL WE WILL BE, HOWEVER.

6. ALSO PLEASE CONVEY MY PERSONAL REGARDS TO GRUEN. SCOTES

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Disposition Reason:
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